

The Places of the Thinking through Bureaucracy

ADMINISTRATORS hate to be called bureaucrats. They prefer to be seen as academic leaders. Leaders articulate priorities and values, serve as exemplars, and represent an institution to both others and itself. Today, more than ever, the humanities and the arts need academic leaders at every level of the university to give them voice, to avow their importance, to articulate the ways in which the humanities and arts speak for the university, the ways in which they give speech to the central values and value of a liberal education. Yet having been a dean for close to a decade, I am aware that leadership takes place in an institutional and human infrastructure: a political landscape, a network of administrative hierarchies, faculty and academic senate committees, academic

units with budgets, constituencies, needs,

and responsibilities. Both day-to-day management and strategic planning take place in a bureaucracy, for better or for worse. The challenge for academic leaders, it seems to me, is to *think through bureaucracy*.

I mean by this that we need to understand administration as an intellectual problem, that we need to understand the intellectual stakes of bureaucracy. Thinking through bureaucracy suggests getting *past* bureaucracy but it also means thinking *in* bureaucracy, understanding bureaucracy as a space in which thinking can occur, a mechanism through which thinking must take place. We must work through bureaucracy because it is an obstacle and because it is the means to our ends. Leadership requires us to work through the institutional structures that both constrain and empower the humanities. The health of the humanities depends on our ability to reinvigorate the academic bureaucracy that the humanities inhabit, especially the departments that define our teaching and research.

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After the release of *Reinvigorating the Humanities: Enhancing Research and Education on Campus and Beyond*, the 2004 report of the Association of American Universities, a University of California, Santa Barbara (UCSB), faculty task force organized a campus discussion called “Humanities@UCSB: A 21st Century Perspective.” But due to a typographical error, or a Freudian slip, a flyer appeared with the title “Humanities@UCSB: A 20th-Century Perspective.” This made me wonder if our perspective was in fact forward-thinking enough, or, indeed, retrospective enough to avoid the common perception that one’s present situation is somehow outside of history. In fact, it seems to me that the problem in the humanities today is that we have twenty-first-century students, a twentieth-century curriculum, and a nineteenth-century bureaucracy. Faculty to some extent occupy all three spheres, which overlap but do not coincide.

The landscape of academic departments and disciplines in the humanities has changed over the last two hundred years, yet there is remarkable continuity in the modern liberal arts university. We can see the traces of the classical expectation that citizens be trained in philosophy, history, and rhetoric, as well as the medieval map of the liberal arts, which included grammar, rhetoric, logic, arithmetic, geometry, astronomy, and music. The university of the future will and should maintain many of the disciplines and pedagogical principles established in ancient and medieval times. It will continue to need coherent canons of knowledge in order to educate its students and establish areas of expertise with which to evaluate its own ongoing work. It will need stable budgetary units that will be receptive to but not buffeted by new academic trends. Furthermore, students, even graduate students, cannot be *post-disciplinary* if they are *pre-disciplinary*. We need majors and degree programs in order to have interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary research and education. The departmental structure will not become obsolete. The challenge lies in figuring out how, when, and where to rewrite the map of the changing academic landscape that we navigate.

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Humanities

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Disciplines and departments

Here is a thought experiment: imagine that one summer after graduation ceremonies, we disbanded all of our academic departments in the humanities and told the faculty to come back in the fall organized into bureaucratic and academic configurations of their choice. Here are the ground rules: no one would lose his or her job, and the budgets and the total number of faculty and staff FTE would be guaranteed for, say, five years. At the same time, faculty would be expected to teach about the same number of majors and non-majors, prepare graduate students for jobs, and maintain a curriculum that would allow students to fulfill university requirements. (We won't let six senior faculty form the Department of Advanced Heidegger Studies and teach only

courses requiring fluency in German and ancient Greek.) In addition, units would have to ensure peer review and expert evaluations for advancements and promotions.

What would happen? Many faculty would be energized by the imaginative and practical enterprise of defining an engaging intellectual community and devising a pedagogical plan in a new major. Some, for personal or intellectual reasons, would be happy to reproduce their previous departments. (Of course, some faculty are not really interested in redefining the shape of the humanities but are unhappy in their own departments and would prefer to be unhappy in another department.) The conditions for both new and old programs would be the same: a critical mass of faculty must support the curriculum, teach the students, and

formulate an intellectual rationale for their fields. There would be political considerations. Departments often police borders and regulate citizenship. Would the fall of the humanities' Berlin Walls mean the dissolution of empires and nation-states into regions and ethnic identifications, or greater unification? Would the new humanities division look like the Israeli Knesset or the Italian Parliament, coalitions of splinter groups trying to exert their influence, or would we see a European Union? Would faculty look for powerful departments, creating a giant history, English, or cultural studies department to function like Russia in the former Soviet Union?

We might see humanities departments that look similar to what we have now—English, French, Spanish—but organized along interdisciplinary lines, including faculty from outside traditional humanities departments. Or we might see interdisciplinary programs defined by the periodization that currently slices departments, such as eighteenth-century studies or modernism. We might see more programs organized by other collective identities, such as gender or racial and ethnic groups. Surely there would be more alliances with the humanistic social sciences. Would we see more departments of performance studies or visual studies?

Many of our literature departments are organized around fictions of national literatures, inflected by vestiges of colonial history. Is a common language or a political/genealogical narrative of literary history an adequate organizing principle for a department? English departments currently contain multitudes: British, American, Native American, post-colonial, Asian American, and Chicano and Chicana literatures. Spanish departments encompass a diversity of traditions, national literatures, and even languages. Influenced by cultural studies and the decline of foreign language teaching in high schools, some national literature departments already have reinvented themselves as cultural studies programs. We have programs in British studies, medieval studies, and Renaissance studies, bringing together historians, art historians, musicologists, and literary scholars. Would these programs replace our current departments?

Thinking about these intellectual configurations, it is instructive to observe how often they mirror professional societies. Indeed, many of the sixty-eight constituent societies

of the American Council of Learned Societies (ACLS) do not parallel an individual academic department, or would not have had a parallel academic department forty years ago. These organizations often mirror programs that exist alongside departments, between departments, often competing with departments for the time and teaching of their own faculty. Indeed, the history of the ACLS constituent societies interacts dynamically and dialogically with the history of our academic departments. Some learned societies mirror departments, some represent subfields within departments, some represent interdisciplinary alliances that may have begun when there were no cognate departments but have helped to establish departments, and others bring together scholars in interdisciplinary alliances precisely because they could not be mapped onto a single academic department or discipline. Think about the ways in which we could and could not superimpose the map of the ACLS constituent societies onto the map of the academic departments of a typical university.

Interdisciplinarity and the burden of the past

I hope it is clear that this is not the call for interdisciplinarity that you've read dozens of times. My point is that interdisciplinary scholarship and teaching are thriving. Humanities and arts faculty at UC Santa Barbara for example, are engaged in initiatives with engineering, nanotechnology, marine science, environmental science, and cognitive science, as well as with the social sciences. My point is that the academic leaders (at every level) who have developed programs for emerging and interdisciplinary fields have not fully succeeded in negotiating the bureaucratic relations between these initiatives and departments and disciplines.

Budgets, FTE lines, and majors, as well as the disciplinary border control that facilitates peer review, can make it difficult for departments to respond to interdisciplinary vectors of research and gradually shifting patterns of enrollments and instruction. Interdisciplinary programs and departments, joint appointments, and new majors and degrees have produced unintended side effects: misalignments between faculty and student FTE, misalignments between undergraduate and graduate programs, programs in which it is difficult for faculty to evaluate each other's work, and departments whose faculty neglect their own curriculum (or want to) to

teach in other programs. Departments may prevent students from taking courses elsewhere, either because they are conscientiously committed to an expanding canon of knowledge and interdisciplinary methodologies, or because they need requirements to populate certain courses that faculty want to teach.

Furthermore, humanities programs face a particular challenge from their historical investment in and commitment to coverage. Humanists are not positivists. They believe in the advancement of knowledge, but for thousands of years the academy has been based on the presumption that intellectual innovation and discovery do not make previously acquired knowledge obsolete. We do not de-acquisition Cervantes from the library shelf because we read Latin American literature; we're the ones who took all the volumes of Freud thrown out by the psychology department, the ones who teach Marx and Darwin and Goethe's *Theory of Colors*. The humanities may be iconoclastic, but they engage in and with *traditions*, in the handing down and transmission of knowledge. New knowledge can come through archeological acts of discovery and rediscovery, through the exploration and mapping of previously neglected territories, and through the continual reinterpretation and reassessment of past, present, and future.

Yet if new subjects do not necessarily displace traditional ones, even as emphases and methodologies change, the expansion of the canon and the globalization of our curriculum present problems for departments. Humanities departments often base their curricular and FTE plans on a model of coverage, and are as reluctant to abandon areas as they are eager to expand canons and add approaches from other disciplines. Many departments redefine fields and adjust requirements; UC Santa Barbara has created digital humanities and digital arts positions, as well as positions in architecture and the environment, media policy, and borderlands history. Yet many departments request positions for new areas while insisting on *field coverage*—strength in all the core areas of a discipline at both the undergraduate and graduate levels. Coverage can provide a reasonable rationale up to a point, but humanities departments need scholarly leadership to articulate more compelling arguments, both intellectually and rhetorically, to justify their resources and finally their bureaucratic identities.

From teaching to research and back

The problem of coverage is related to the bureaucratic and cultural disconnect between teaching and research that many humanities faculty experience. Although their teaching can inspire their research and their classrooms can be laboratories, they look with envy at their colleagues in the sciences who not only teach less but get teaching credit for research activities that result in publications and summer stipends. Humanities departments typically deliver student credit hours or student FTE rather than grants and contracts, and in general this makes them cost-effective and even profit centers for the university. Although their distinguished faculty conduct internationally recognized research, their institutional power tends to reside in their enrollments; and their annual delivery of a curriculum that fulfills a set of departmental and general education requirements simultaneously empowers and impoverishes them.

Some departments are changing themselves from within, reexamining their requirements,

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focusing on distinctive strengths, and creating emphases that give focus and coherence to majors. Faculty engage in innovative work in their articles and classrooms. On the bureaucratic level, however, interdisciplinary initiatives and research opportunities for faculty result in strain and loss for departments, leading departments to resist change. Faculty want to teach outside of their departments, or teach courses outside of their fields. Course buyouts seem inadequate and they downgrade the level of teaching in the home department. Entrepreneurial faculty who start research centers or special projects—funded and supported by administrators—end up feeling burdened or even exploited. They want course relief, which is then resented by their chairs. Joint appointments between departments and interdisciplinary programs can be an effective strategy but faculty complain about service obligations; the department and program can disagree about tenure cases. On the other hand, without joint departments, interdisciplinary programs can duplicate faculty in other programs, hiring literary scholars or historians or art historians on their own. We still have not solved the imaginative and bureaucratic problem of designing an academic landscape in which faculty live simultaneously in departments and interdepartmental and/or interdisciplinary programs.

Part of my strategy as dean has been to find ways to keep departments from experiencing interdisciplinary initiatives and research projects as loss. I have encouraged faculty and departments to think in terms of *course credit* rather than *course relief*, to find ways to give both faculty and students credit for these sorts of projects. When I offered funds for interdisciplinary curricular initiatives, I stipulated that courses had to be offered within departments. Our comparative literature program lets the home department of the instructor get all of the enrollment credit from its courses, which turns out to be a good deal for some departments with underpopulated courses. A summer theater lab involving visiting artist residencies created a parallel undergraduate course so students and faculty could get credit.

We have a variety of centers both in and between departments to organize research clusters and to integrate teaching and research to a greater extent, especially for graduate students. Some of these have been magnets for grants and philanthropic support. These include, among

other centers, the Carsey–Wolf Center for Film, Television, and New Media, for which we’ve raised \$10 million; the Walter H. Capps Center for Study of Ethics, Religion, and Public Life, for which we received a \$500,000 National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) matching grant that helped us to raise an additional \$1.5 million; the English department’s Early Modern Center, which has just received a \$325,000 NEH grant for an online English Ballad Archive project; and a digital humanities project that had early NEH seed funding and has spawned two University of California multi-campus research groups.

The success of these and other projects has led our faculty to propose a humanities lab initiative that would develop new paradigms for collaborative research projects in the humanities. These research projects would incorporate team-teaching and graduate student training. We need to break down the opposition between teaching and research in the humanities and make our ability to join the two an advantage rather than a liability. We have created freshman courses linked to our departmental centers, taught by graduate students, in an effort to create vertical integration across faculty, graduate students, and undergraduates. We have created a postdoctoral fellow position (which includes some teaching) in our Early Modern Center. The challenge has been to locate these centers in and across departments in order to connect them to the life and teaching of the departments we want them to enrich rather than drain departmental resources. Some of them also have a public humanities component—especially the Capps Center and the Carsey–Wolf Center for Film, Television, and New Media (which works with the Donald Bren School of Environmental Science and Management on an environmental media initiative). Public programming has allowed us to draw a public audience. This includes philanthropic donors, but we need public engagement as much as we need funding.

The place and places of the humanities

In order to reinvigorate the humanities, academic leaders must take into account the need for strong departments and degree programs that address the intellectual and pedagogical demands of faculty and students drawn to interdisciplinary ventures. At the same time, we must design a landscape of departments in regional affiliations, confederations, and

alliances rather than the old model in which each department stands as an autonomous country with borders separating languages, cultures, and citizens. We may want to locate FTEs within academic departments yet make allocations that recognize research specializations and/or teaching responsibilities that address the interests of other departments and interdisciplinary programs.

It may be that the model of faculty living in the same department for their undergraduate and graduate programs will become obsolete. Someone might teach undergraduate courses in an English or history department yet work with graduate students (and other faculty) in a medieval studies research center. This is not a new model, at least outside of the humanities or outside of the United States, but it will require a rethinking of departments and degrees, and new paradigms for research, teaching, and public engagement in the humanities that lead to new bureaucratic paradigms.

There are many success stories in the humanities, but the very success of the humanities in reinvigorating itself has in some ways led to the creation of a shadow university in the programs and centers that lie in the interstices of the current structure. Strategic planning, the reinvention of the humanities that has occurred throughout the ages, must be carried out by the faculty, most of whom live in departments that can be agents of resistance rather than change, for both good and bad reasons. I have been suggesting that we acknowledge some of the *good* reasons. Abandoning traditional majors in many cases would be pedagogically unsound. Some worry about the fate of reading and literary analysis in cultural studies programs dominated by historical or sociological approaches. Furthermore, dismantling departments could represent strategic suicide if it takes away the rationale for a discipline and opens the door to downsizing and an indiscriminate assembling of humanities fields and faculty. Many faculty fear that administrators' interest in interdisciplinarity masks an agenda to downsize, consolidate, and weaken departmental power structures.

This paranoid vision of interdisciplinarity is not wholly paranoid. There is a danger that the game of sending people home to form new de-

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partments on the university level would really be a game of musical chairs and that, when the music stops, the humanities would be left standing. Generic units of literature or humanities professors, without a coherent canon of knowledge or a rationale for necessary research fields, might encourage the attitude that humanities programs are cen-

ters of service rather than research centers, and increase the tendency to hire lecturers or adjuncts rather than research professors.

This is where academic leadership makes a difference. We need to explain why the arts and humanities matter, why they are at the core of a liberal education, providing the context for all disciplines. The digital arts, digital media, and digital humanities are exciting and vital today, but the arts and humanities are not relevant *only* insofar as they relate to technology. As we enter a world of difference in the global society taking shape around us, what can be more important to our understanding of the stories that we tell about others and ourselves than history, religion, language, art, and culture? If the university of the future does not have a central place for the humanities, and for the principles of the liberal education that the humanities embody in both research and teaching, then the university will be impoverished along with the humanities.

For the humanities to have a place, however, faculty, faculty committees, department chairs, deans, and learned societies need to worry about the places in which the humanities conduct and organize their research and teaching, and that means thinking about bureaucracy. Thinking about bureaucracy, thinking through bureaucracy, means designing new maps rather than defending territory. If we ignore bureaucracy, we will risk leaving the humanities vulnerable to the sort of academic redistricting that will leave us without a territory to defend. We need an overlay of maps that design and define the overlapping intellectual communities in which teaching and research take place and new forms of collaboration develop. These are the maps that will help students, colleagues, academic leaders, and the public understand that all roads lead to the humanities. □